

Constructing Knowledge Through Small Group Time



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Turn to the people around you
and discuss:

- What small-group interactions in your life do you enjoy? Why?
- What kinds of small group experiences do children enjoy? Why?

Let's talk!

What is small group time?

- Part of the daily routine, separate from other activities
- Lasts for about 15 minutes
- An unchanging group of children with the same adult
- Active learning in a supportive setting
- An adult-initiated learning experience based on children's interests and development



What do children and adults do at small group time?

Adults

- plan small group experiences ahead of time.
- prep small group mat'ls before children arrive.
- sets small group in motion: the beginning
- support each child's ideas and use of materials: the middle
- bring small-group time to a close: the end.
- evaluate

Children

- contribute their own ideas.
- build on their own interests.
- explore new learning areas and materials.
- problem-solve with children and adults.
- feel supported in an intimate grouping.

Hohmann, Mary, Weikart, David.
*Educating Young Children 2nd
edition.* High/Scope Press. 2002

Why is small group time important?

An opportunity

- to build on children's strengths
- to provide new materials and experiences
- for regular peer contacts and interactions
- for adults to observe and interact daily with the same children
- for adults to practice support strategies in a stable setting.



How are small groups formed?

You have 17 three- and four- year-olds. A few of the children speak a language other than English. One of the children is in a wheelchair.

Determine how you will create small well balanced groups based on:

- characteristics of the children in the group
- criteria at the beginning of the year to consider
- considerations for changing the make-up of the small groups
- concrete ways used to let children know which small group they are in
- Concrete ways to inform children of a change in small groups

What is Intentional Teaching?

- Teachers act with specific outcomes in mind.
- Teachers integrate and promote meaningful learning in *all* domains.
- Requires a wide range of knowledge about how children typically develop and learn.
- Requires a repertoire of instructional strategies.
- Knowing when to use a given strategy.

Elements of Intentional Teaching

- High expectations
- Planning and management
- Learning-oriented classroom
- Engaging activities
- Thoughtful questioning
- Feedback



Activity

Plan a small group time experience

- **Originating idea** and how it blends into the curriculum being used:
- **Materials:**
- **Beginning:**
- **Middle**-ways to support children:
- **End**-closure:
- **Follow up:**



“If teachers observe children’s thinking and actions, the attempts to scaffold their learning are likely to be on target.”

Epstein, 2007

Resources

- Hohmann, Mary, Weikart, David. *Educating Young Children 2nd edition*. High/Scope Press. 2002
- Hohmann, Mary, Weikart, David. *A Study Guide to Educating Young Children 2nd edition*. High/Scope Press. 2002
- Epstein, Ann S. *The Intentional Teacher*. NAEYC. 2007

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